

jubilance once again erupted in the streets of Chicago. Drivers honked their horns all along Michigan Avenue, while passengers leaned out of their windows, waving American flags. Joe Biden had finally been declared the victor of the 2020 Presidential election, his running mate: KAMALA HARRIS, the first African-American and first woman Vice President of the United States. The scene in Chicago was a fitting tribute to the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment's ratification.

This month, America celebrates Women's History Month. And the people of my State are proud of the leading role Illinois has played in America's long struggle for gender equality. In 2018, Illinois lawmakers ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. Our State attorney general, along with the attorneys general of two other States, is now pressing in Federal court for the ERA to be officially recognized as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as it should be.

We are proud of the remarkable women our State has produced. Some were Illinoisans by birth, others by choice. They include Ida B. Wells, the courageous journalist, anti-lynching leader, and suffragist; Jane Addams, the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize and a cofounder of the Hull House, a Chicago landmark; Mamie Till Mobley, a mother who forced the world to reckon with the brutality of racism when she opened the casket of her only son, Emmett; Betty Friedan, author of "The Feminine Mystique," a book that inspired a new wave of American feminism; Gwendolyn Brooks, poet laureate of Illinois from 1968 until her death in 2000 and the first Black woman inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters; Sandra Cisneros, a renowned writer and educator whose work is taught in classrooms across the country; Jeanne Gang, a world-class architect whose work graces the skyline of Chicago, including the tallest building in the world designed by a woman, the St. Regis Chicago; Jackie Joyner-Kersey, one of the world's greatest track and field athletes and the founder of the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Foundation, which offers athletic and educational programming to kids in my hometown of East St. Louis, IL; Precious Brady-Davis, an environmentalist and transgender woman who has shed light on the experiences of transgender parents; Oprah Winfrey, the host of a daytime talk show you may have heard of—her career as a talk show host actually began on "A.M. Chicago"; Hillary Clinton, the first woman to be nominated for President by a major political party, she may have represented New York in the U.S. Senate, but her roots are firmly planted in Park Ridge, IL; Michelle Obama, another former First Lady who broke barriers—she is the pride of Chicago's South Side, and I am grateful to call her a friend; and my colleague in this body, Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH, an American hero.

In 2018, the people of Illinois elected Juliana Stratton as our 48th Lieutenant Governor, the first woman of color ever elected to hold a constitutional office in our State. She is a dynamo and part of a new generation of women who are taking their rightful place as political leaders in our Nation. In the 2020 elections, women across America turned out in historic numbers, and voters elected a record number of women to higher office.

But we still have a long way to go. America lags well behind other developed nations when it comes to gender equality in our government. Women account for fewer than 30 percent of our representatives in either Chamber of Congress. Countries like Finland, Sweden, and New Zealand are far closer to 50 percent, meaning complete gender parity.

So it is certainly welcome news that President Biden has nominated 12 women for Cabinet and Cabinet-level positions, including Janet Yellen, the first female Secretary of Treasury, and Congresswoman DEB HAALAND, who would be the first Native American to ever serve as a Cabinet Secretary.

While the past year has been one of historic triumph for women, it has also been one of unprecedented challenge. The pandemic has disproportionately devastated women. In December, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the United States lost 140,000 jobs in a single month. A staggering number that is even worse than it seems, women accounted for every single one of those job losses. Men, meanwhile, managed to gain 16,000 jobs that month.

Working women, and especially working women of color, have been hardest hit by this pandemic. When schools across the country were forced to shut their doors, these women were thrust into the dual roles of breadwinner and primary caregiver. They shouldered the burden of keeping our families and children safe. This is essential work. And just as frontline workers need PPE to safely do their jobs, working mothers need economic relief to do theirs.

That is what the American Rescue Plan President Biden signed into law this month delivers. It expands the child tax credit, offering up to \$3,600 per child; it invests in our families, by increasing the value of SNAP benefits and expanding childcare assistance; and it gives every working American \$1,400. The American Rescue Plan will help working mothers weather this once-in-a-century public health and economic crisis.

After a year of COVID lockdowns and losses, America is finally beginning to feel a sense of hope that the end of this pandemic is coming, and looking at the headlines, it is hard not to share that optimism.

Under President Biden, we are vaccinating more than 2 million Americans a day. As of last week, more people in the United States have been fully vac-

inated than our total number of coronavirus cases since the beginning of the pandemic. By the beginning of summer, we should have a large enough supply of vaccines to inoculate every adult in America. This is one of the greatest scientific feats in modern history.

A major reason we were able to develop COVID-19 vaccines at such lightning-fast speed is because of the pioneering research conducted over decades by a brilliant scientist, one of the unsung heroes of our world. Her name is Katalin Karikó. Like many American heroes, she is an immigrant. She began her research in a lab in Hungary, when it was still under Communist rule. Back then, she believed that synthetic messenger RNA could hold the key to treating some of the world's most debilitating diseases.

She followed that dream across continents, immigrating to the United States in the 1980s. But people—and, let's be honest, men—doubted her at every turn. Her grants were rejected. She faced demotions. She was even threatened with deportation. One of the few institutions that supported Katalin's work was the National Institutes of Health. The experts at NIH didn't just follow the science; they supported the visionary behind the science. And that investment paid off. Her research into messenger RNA eventually blazed a trail for the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines, which are helping curb the spread of COVID-19 at this very moment.

As we turn the corner of this pandemic, let us remember that it was not a miracle that got us here. It was science. It was dedication. It was the work of trailblazers like Katalin Karikó.

As I mentioned, Betty Friedan is one of the great women leaders to come out of Illinois. In her seminal work, "The Feminine Mystique," she asked: "Who knows what women can be when they are finally free to become themselves?"

As we celebrate women's history, let us also renew our commitment to investing in women's futures. Who knows how many Katalin Karikós are out there, ready to change the world?

For our own good, for the good of humankind, let's ensure every woman has an opportunity to "become themselves."

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as a Member of Congress, I have cast a number of important votes over the years, votes on whether to send our Nation's brave servicemembers to war or to impeach a President, but perhaps the most important vote I have ever cast was 11 years ago this week, in support of the Affordable Care Act.

Since the law's passage in 2010, the ACA has provided health insurance to more than 23 million Americans, including nearly 1 million Illinoisans. That is almost 1 out of every 20 people

living in my home State. Thanks to the ACA, they are now covered. That measure was called the Affordable Care Act for a reason: It is estimated to have saved every family in America about \$4,000 in health insurance premiums.

I don't think any of us could have predicted 11 years ago just how important the protections it guaranteed to Americans would become. Then came the coronavirus. In the year since the pandemic was declared, the virus has claimed more than half a million American lives. That is more than the number of American lives lost in World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam war combined.

We grieve with every family who has suffered a loss, and we know there are millions more Americans who have been affected by the virus. Thirty million of our family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors have been diagnosed with COVID-19. That is 30 million Americans who are now living with a preexisting condition. We have heard stories about the so-called long-haulers, individuals who report they are still having health problems months after their original diagnosis. They are struggling with shortness of breath, trouble sleeping, severe fatigue, and other symptoms that NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins has deemed a "significant public health concern."

These Americans have enough to worry about as it is with their recovery; could you imagine if they also had to worry about being able to qualify for health coverage? In a world without the ACA, they would have. Before the ACA was the law of the land, people could be denied health coverage or charged significantly higher premiums for having diabetes or asthma—even acne.

Could you imagine if this pandemic hit before we passed that law? The tens of millions of Americans who would have to wonder how they were going to pay for their care, their children's care, in the middle of a pandemic?

Thanks to the ACA, they are covered. It has been a lifeline for millions of Americans, like Michelle Crifasi, one of my neighbors in Springfield, IL. Recently, Michelle wrote to me about what the ACA has meant for her and her family. For much of her life, Michelle was burdened with an unknown illness, until she was finally diagnosed with common variable immune deficiency in her mid-thirties. It is a rare condition that limits the immune system's ability to fight infection. The diagnosis was bittersweet. While she could finally begin to understand and treat her condition, she later learned that she had passed it down to her daughter. Her husband also developed it after undergoing cancer treatment.

The good news is that Michelle and her family have health insurance through her employer, and because of the Affordable Care Act, this employer-

based health plan can no longer deny Michelle health coverage or charge her higher premiums because she has a preexisting condition. Her insurer can no longer impose annual or lifetime caps on her care. It can't cut her off right when she needs healthcare the most. Michelle's daughter, Meredith, a junior at the University of Illinois-Springfield, is able to stay on her parents' plan until age 26. Because of the ACA, Michelle's health plan must cover her family's prescription drug costs.

Without insurance coverage, treating common variable immune deficiency can cost patients more than \$100,000 a year. Put simply, these protections were not in place before the Affordable Care Act, and Michelle and her family are alive today because of these protections. This family's story is proof that the ACA is one of the greatest legislative accomplishments in modern American history, and it is also proof that there is a lot more we can do to protect people like her and her family.

While Michelle is grateful for the ACA, she recently told me that "I feel there is more work to be done." And she is right, which is why we fought, as part of the American Rescue Plan, to expand health insurance subsidies and eligibility for plans covered under the ACA. These provisions will ensure that no enrollee spends more than 8.5 percent of their income on health insurance premiums. The typical 60-year-old couple in Illinois could see their premiums reduced by \$1,300.

The ARP also increases eligibility for premium subsidies to working-class American families earning more than 400 percent of the Federal poverty level.

Outside of the ARP, the Biden-Harris administration has taken other steps to bolster the ACA, like creating a special open enrollment period and ensuring that the DOJ defends the law in the case before the Supreme Court. All of this is welcome news, and I look forward to working with the Biden-Harris administration to accomplish even more. That is why we not only celebrate the historic passage of the ACA but all of the lives it has saved as well.

After years of unrelenting, unjustified attacks on this critical piece of legislation, we are finally in a position to build on it. I am ready to work with the Biden-Harris administration to create a public option, lower prescription drug prices, and address racial and ethnic disparities in our healthcare system.

After 11 years since its passage, I am proud to declare: The ACA is here to stay.

And here in Congress, we will continue working to perfect it.

NOTICE OF A TIE VOTE, UNDER S. RES. 27

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to print the following letter in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

The Secretary of the Senate:

PN79-6, the nomination of Colin Hackett Kahl, of California, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, having been referred to the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee, with a quorum present, has voted on the nomination as follows—

On the question of reporting the nomination favorably with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed, 13 ayes to 13 noes; and

In accordance with section 3, paragraph (1)(A) of S. Res. 27 of the 117th Congress, I hereby give notice that the Committee has not reported the nomination because of a tie vote, and ask that this notice be printed in the RECORD pursuant to the resolution.

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Arlington, VA.

Hon. ROBERT MENENDEZ,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 21-31 concerning the Army's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Republic of Korea for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$36 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

Sincerely,

HEIDI H. GRANT,
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 21-31

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

- (i) Prospective Purchaser: Republic of Korea
- (ii) Total Estimated Value:
Major Defense Equipment * \$33 million.
Other \$3 million.
Total \$36 million.
- (iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase: